

WHY CAN'T I CRY

Che

an exploration of intimacy, vulnerability, and tears

don't look at me

The last time I did some shit like this, I walked away not feeling a thing. For the most part, that remained the same today. It feels like a mirror--as my pupils shift to the left, your pupils quickly shift to match mine.

Warm grins dialectically build into wider and wider smiles; each rise passes like Doppler and his effects, and my affects are comets racing past my ears. It was never gradual; each shift on the edge of my lip led to a shift in yours, and that, in turn, led to a shift in mine. Each was unique, building on your before and anticipating your after.

We would push and pull on opposite sides of an accordion, with its cracks and airy chords, and sometimes I thought we had pulled so hard it would snap. It was a contest, more than anything, building noise--push and pull, not just some idyllic crescendoing of intensities. Each note was a precise moment where I read your face, and you read my face, but I didn't and don't want to believe it was that rigid.

I wanted to close my eyes or turn off the lights, and say that I'd feel the same type of immense joys and sorrows altogether. I wanted to pretend this wasn't just some edgy art project, and that I could suspend time and space, but our compressions weren't just in a vacuum.

Like when I'd stared so deeply into your eyes, and my eyes started to well up, reaching near the peak, feeling as though I was pushing Camus' boulder up the mountain so vigorously, so intently, so focused on letting out one tear.

And it worked. Kind of.

I made your ugly face cry an ugly snot-filled cry, but my dry-ass face didn't need to be wiped, and my face became flush with your tears in front of me, and my face became flush with my inability to match those tears. I would nod, trying to communicate that it's alright to cry, but really, it's not. It's not okay. Stop crying, please. Stop that. Stop. I did that to you, I think. Why can't you make me cry? Or why can't I cry?

(This accordion falls deaf on my ears...)

diasphoria blues

The first time we stared deeply into each other's eyes, it was on purpose. Deliberate. Planned and structured; a project with more rules than rules in the ether.

Blue eyes scare me. I remember the first time I stared into blue eyes, I thought they were monsters--ghosts, maybe. I thought those blues would sink into my chest like knives--slide between the ribs. They would crack my sternum and pierce my lungs and

I can't breathe

The blues fill my lungs, from the bottom up, and I smell rust in the air. Soon enough, those blues seep out the holes in my chest and flow slowly down the flesh, navigating every crack and curve, depositing blue hues as they pass my hip and down my groin. The blue gets caught in webs of hair and presses forward, down to my toes, melting through the floor, and disappearing below... from what I can tell.

But the blues aren't the same this time. A little lighter than the last. More like thin needles pressed into the body, all around, in waves that circulate on the flesh.

Imagine. Ever so slightly, you wedge a nail under your big toe. It's there, and it doesn't hurt. You forget it's even there. Now you kick a door with all your weight. Feel it. That's dark blue, and that's fragility, like cracks in dried paint.

Light blues eclipse at your toes, so slowly, and you don't notice. The needles push, bit-by-bit, and there's no pain, not a sensation. But you look down at your feet, and you realize your nail has been peeled right off, and the needles are digging into your bones--embedded.

We live in an imperfect world, where problematizing everything is beside the point; who has the energy for that? Our social lives are processual. Though those needles are fixed within, I want them here now. It's a part of me, and I need it. I am it. Right here. Right now.

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I've already been colonized plenty. Sometimes my bleached mind even colonizes my body. I consent, briefly. It's too late to take it back now...

I hate pink.

Pink nipples, pink vulvas, pink dicks, pink-washing presence. Pink palettes and crusty pink skin. Everywhere.

But brown is beautiful. Melanin is medicine, they say. Brown sews my wounds--it seals the holes in the chest, or perhaps the soul--hyperpigmentation. Tucked beneath, the needles remain, but brown envelopes those blues--remembering... and I can breathe.

How do we decolonize and continue to love?

They're finding the melanin within too. They have that..

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I'm sorry

I don't want to pick up and leave, and you're tugging at my strings and that accordion presses
firm while you're laying in my lap, and I'm combing your hair with my fingers

I'm sorry

And I can't just go like that. That lump in your throat is tearing its way out of you

I'm sorry

I'm sitting with one leg up, and water drips from my hair

I'm sorry

I really want to commit and be here and

I'm sorry

I'm leaving this place and

I'm sorry

I can't commit

I'm sorry

This hurts

I'm so sorry

The tape recorder's here for you. The weekend was amazing, and I'll be back and maybe you'll find me, and

I want to cry

rocks in my bag

I'm figuring out how to cry much better than I could have just a few weeks ago, and I didn't understand how it could just be a deliberate act. When I think about producing tears in my eyes, I feel like I'm flexing a muscle--almost like I can feel my tear ducts filling up like a cup under a faucet, and I can't believe that crying might just be an act of the body--of muscle memory. It's as physical as dropping rocks in my backpack.

Geologists have a strange fascination with rocks. It's just a quirk of the field. As a geologist, you could hand me a rock and I could probably tell you what minerals are in it and approximately how old it is from thousands to hundreds of millions of years old. Spending time in the field gets boring. At times I've had to stare at cliff walls for twelve hours straight. Geology field work is like an ethnography of rocks. Except the rocks don't talk, and the rocks don't have feelings (I think?), and the rocks don't express those feelings (I think?).

But rocks have vanity, or at least I project that vanity onto those rocks. And when you don't have anything better to do in the field as a geologist, you start looking for pretty rocks and stuff them in your bag. Do you remember those little colorful rock stands at zoo gift shops where you could pick your favorite glossy stones and pop 'em in your bag? That's my world all the time.

Some backpacks are heavier than others, I guess, and some field days our backpacks become more full than others. Some of us carry a lot of rocks with us, and some of us take only what we need. And maybe I've just taken too many rocks and haven't given enough up. But giving rocks

away sucks. Especially the pretty ones. It doesn't make any sense to keep them forever, really. It's selfish. Once you've seen it and held it or licked it (geologists do that), whether that's once or twice or a dozen times, it's been tucked away somewhere in that grey matter. But having that favorite rock in my bag gives me a sense of security. It's wild how we attach so much meaning to an object.

When my friends travel around the world, they bring me the coolest rocks they can find. I've got river stones from Iceland and fossils from 400 million years ago. I have a piece of the Great Wall of China (which I think is a felony), and another brought me fresh pumice from Hawaii. I used to carry that pumice with me everywhere.

On September 1st of 2015, I get a call from an unknown number. I pick the phone up and respond. It's a woman. Her name is Trudy. She's the mother of Andrew. You know, Andrew, the kid that used to bum cigarettes off of you and asked you to drive him around town.

He overdosed on heroin, and he's been dead for a few months. They found his body 12 hours after he died. He was resuscitated but remained vegetative for weeks before the plug was pulled.

I'm the first one to know outside of Andrew's family. I plan a memorial ceremony and everything passes like a blur and maybe I prefer that. I have glimpses here and there, but all I remember well is that rock--the pumice from Hawaii. I took it from his house when going through his things, and it reminds me of him.

It reminds me of driving past his house everyday for weeks to no avail, and it reminds me of the missed phone calls I sent his way. I wonder if the pumice looked like the shatter he crushed into powder and shot up his arm, and I wonder how the rush of endorphins shattered his despair. I bet the despair left his cold blue body and condensed into that rock. And that rock rests in my bag today, and maybe it's time for me to throw it back out.

i cried today, and it was

Behind her was a window, people passing by. Green stood tall outside, casting shadows shaped like nets of leaves against her face; her eyes glow in and fade out, in and out like the branches shifting in the wind.

I don't know her, really. She's around, and we've talked a few times...

"why can't i cry" is an experimental ethnography of emotions and an art project.

In this project, I take a friend (present), a stranger (past), a lover (past and present), and we stare into each other's eyes for ten minutes straight, followed by ten minutes of stream-of-consciousness writing. This is the product.

When we start off, the vast majority of our interactions start with a few words, followed by "we're not supposed to talk, but we don't have to keep a straight face"

It ebbs and flows like a boat in pulsing waters. There's a variety of motions you can make in a boat, passing your arm through the waters forward or backwards, or side to side. If you're leaning too far back, your weight will tip into the blue, buoyancy resisting endlessly with every shift.

This boat is drifting on my rising tears, and the dam is flooding over.

The edge of her lip crests up, and you focus so deeply on the lines that separate. Those lines are just gradients, if you change the scale. Those gradients widen with every blink, and every blink is followed by the crash of her eyelashes, limited by the frames I can see and limited by the frames I can't remember.

I force a smile, and she smirks, with a sense of betrayal. The smirk breaks as her top lip slides gently (but purposefully) against her teeth, rising over and resting above.

The dam cracks, and my body vibrates as I hold my breath. My hands grasp tight over my mouth, and quick pulses of life pass between my fingers. Biting down on my lower, lips reek of rust as the wall splits, like sledge against the 'crete, and spirits spew like soju off my colonized lips and accordions press on my chest.

And hysteria consumes me and probably her and the walls are paper thin and we stop every few seconds to breath and the dam is pouring over, off the edge of the earth and

i cried today, and it was

it just was.